



Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish,
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GYMNOSTERIS PARVULA

SMALL-FLOWER GYMNOSTERIS

Small-flower *Gymnosteris* is a glabrous annual with unbranched or occasionally branched stems that are 1-4 cm tall. There is a pair of persistent, connected cotyledons near the base of the stem and a single whorl of 3-8 mm long lance to oval shaped, often connected, bract-like leaves just below the flower cluster; otherwise the stem is leafless, hence the genus name, which means "naked stem". The flower or flowers are sessile in a compact cluster. The calyx is 2.5-4 mm long, pale-colored, thin and chaffy in texture, and has five minutely bristle-tipped lobes. The white to pinkish to yellowish or bronze corolla has a tube that is 2.5-5 mm long, and 5 spreading lobes that are 0.7-1.5 mm long. Five stamens are attached by very short stalks to the inside top of the flower tube, and there is a single basal pistil. The corolla tube expands and remains like a hood on the mature fruit. The fruit is a dry, multi-chambered capsule that contains many seeds which become mucilaginous when wet. Flowering in June.

Distinguished among small annuals in our area by the leafless stems except for the cotyledons, and its single whorl of bracts just below the flowers.